

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4103

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2489

FOLG TELE RPTD FOR YOUR INFO. QUOTE.

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 0334

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: MRS GANDHI'S VISIT TO MADRAS

1. MRS GANDHI RECEIVED A ROUSING RECEPTION AT THE FEBRUARY 15 MASS MEETING ORGANIZED ON THE MARINA BY THE CONGRESS PARTY TO MARK THE MERGER OF THE TWO CONGRESS PARTIES, BUT THE REACTION TO HER OTHER APPEARANCES WAS RESTRAINED AND UNENTHUSIASTIC. A CROWD ESTIMATED AT 700-800 THOUSAND, WHICH HAD BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE CITY IN SPECIAL TRAINS AND IN MORE THAN 3000 BUSES AND TRUCKS COMMANDEERED BY THE CONGRESS PARTY WAS LARGER THAN ANY RALLIED BY CONGRESS IN RECENT YEARS AND IT CHEERED HER ENTHUSIASTICALLY AT THE MARINA MEETING, DESPITE POOR LOUDSPEAKERS WHICH MADE HER REMARKS INAUDIBLE TO MOST. AT THE OTHER MEETINGS, HOWEVER, THE TURNOUT WAS NOT IMPRESSIVE AND APPLAUSE WAS SPARSE AND PERFUNCTORY. SECURITY MEASURES THROUGHOUT THE VISIT WERE EXTREMELY HEAVY, WITH FACILITIES FOR RESTRAINING THE CROWDS FAR IN EXCESS (EXCEPT AT THE MARINA) OF THOSE WHO TURNED OUT.

2. MRS GANDHI'S MAJOR APPEARANCE WAS THE CONGRESS
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PARTY RALLY AND WE ARE REPORTING SEPARATELY ON THE JUSTIFICATION FOR PRESIDENT'S RULE AND THE CHARGES

AGAINST THE DMK GOVERNMENT WHICH SHE MADE ON THE OCCASION. (MADRAS 0333).

3. HER SECOND MAJOR APPSERMEFE WAS AT THE DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL TO KAMARAJ ON FEBRUARY 14. HERE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WERE SO TIGHT THAT THE AUDIENCE WAS STOCKADED OFF A GOOD 150 YARDS FROM THE SPEAKERS'V PLATFORM AND THE FIRST NINE ROWS OF THE AUDIENCE (LABELED "PRESS") WERE FILLED WITH SECURITY MEN. MRS GANDHI RECOUNTED IN DETAIL HER "KNOWLEDGE"

THAT KAMARAJ'S "LAST WISH" WAS TO SEE THE IMEDIATE REUNION OF THE TWO CONGRESS PARTIES. PERHAPS NOT ALL LISTENERS WERE AS SKEPTICAL AS MY WEST GERMAN COLLEAGUE, WHO DESCRIBED THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AS "A FAIRY TALE TOLD QUICKLY AND WITH A BAD CONSCIENCE TO A DISBELIEVING AUDIENCE," BUT ANUMBER OF PEOPLE HAVE COMMENTED PRIVATELY THAT "DEAD MEN CANNOT ANSWER BACK." THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS WERE RECEIVED PERFUNCTORILY, BUT THERE WERE A FEW CRIES OF "KAMARAJ KI JAI" AT THE END. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ESCAPE THE CONCLUSION THAT THOSE PRESENT HAD COME TO HONOR KAMARAJ AND NOT MRS GANDHI.

4. MRS GANDHI REMAINED IN RELATIVELY GOOD SPIRITS DURING HER VISIT TO TAMIL NADU, THE ONLY TOUCH OF BAD HUMOR IN PUBLIC BEING HER BERATING THE AUDIENCE AT CHINGELPUT FOR NOT SINGING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM LUSTILY ENOUGH. AND SHE TOOK ONLY ONE PASSING AND LOW-KEY SWIPE AT THE U.S. (MADRAS 0315).
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